

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A belt loading apparatus has been provided for loading a flimsy continuous belt onto a belt support and drive assembly including a vertical front end having a first shape and without damage to the belt. The belt loading apparatus includes a wall member defining a sleeve including an outer surface having a total outer surface area, a first edge and a second and opposite edge. The second edge has a vertical profile having a second shape such that the second shape of the second edge is a mirror image of the first shape of the belt support and drive assembly. The belt loading apparatus then includes friction reducing members formed on the outer surface of the sleeve for temporarily supporting and spacing a flimsy continuous belt to be loaded onto the belt support and drive assembly. The friction reducing members each have a belt contact area such that a sum total of belt contact areas of all the friction reducing members is significantly less than the total outer surface area of the sleeve.